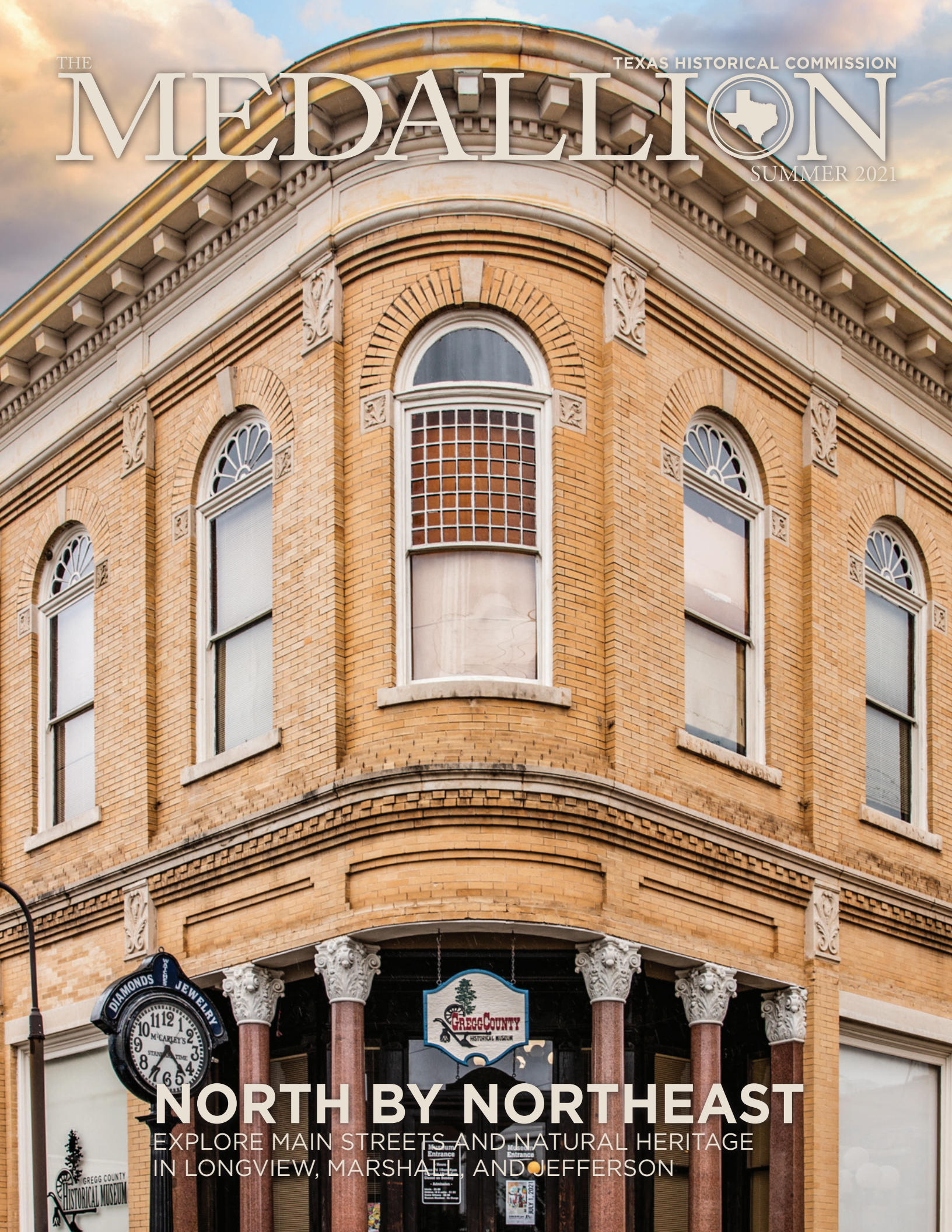


THE

MEDALLION

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUMMER 2021



NORTH BY NORTHEAST

EXPLORE MAIN STREETS AND NATURAL HERITAGE
IN LONGVIEW, MARSHALL, AND JEFFERSON



THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MEDALLION
SUMMER 2021

ISSN 0890-7595 Vol. 59, No. III
thc.texas.gov thc@thc.texas.gov

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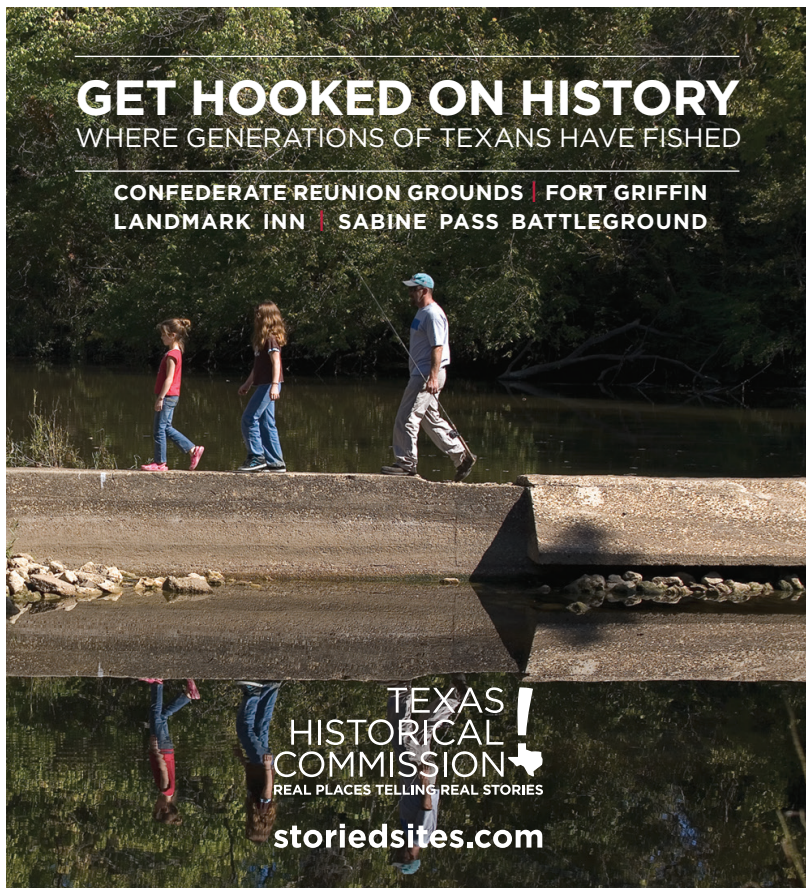
Our Mission

To protect and preserve the state's historic and prehistoric resources for the use, education, enjoyment, and economic benefit of present and future generations.

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The Medallion is financed in part by a grant from the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. All of the agency's public programs and activities are operated free from discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, gender, or disability. Any person who believes he or she has been discriminated against should write to Office of Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240.

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TOP: A Main Street public engagement event hosted in Georgetown.

ON THE COVER: The Gregg County Historical Museum is one of Longview's only remaining examples of Classical Revival commercial architecture. Photo by Andy Rhodes.



TEXAS HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES
SPEAKER
DADE PHELAN
LEADERSHIP LETTER

Dear Friends,

Texans take enormous and well-deserved pride in the Lone Star State's incredible history. It is the story of how we became an economic and cultural powerhouse that inspires others across the world.

That certainly holds for House District 21, on the plains of the southeastern Texas Gulf Coast, where I've represented my district for four terms. One of the Texas Historical Commission's most-visited state historic sites is here in the Sabine Pass Battleground, the location of a significant Civil War battle where a Union assault on this important port was thwarted. We enjoy our beautiful natural resources, including Sea Rim State Park and the McFaddin National Wildlife Refuge.

Our district enthusiastically supported the recent restoration of the 1930 First National Bank of Port Arthur. This remarkable building, with ties to Texaco co-founder John (Warne) Gates, was restored by the Port Arthur Economic Development Corporation via the THC's Texas Historic Preservation Tax Credit Program.

As Speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, I value the THC's work with citizens and organizations across the state to preserve our state's significant landmarks while encouraging economic development through heritage tourism.

I encourage my fellow Texans to explore our historical attractions and support the preservation of our diversity of heritage, culture, and history that uniquely defines us. I'm thankful the THC is preserving our many historical assets and encouraging Texans to value our cultural resources.

Sincerely,

Dade Phelan, Speaker

State Representative—House District 21

MAIN STREET'S BACK

PROGRAM SHOWS RESILIENCE, GROWTH

By Debra Drescher
THC Main Street Program Coordinator

Scary. Uncertain. Unsure. Bleak. These words described 2020 for Main Street programs and the small businesses in their historic districts—not just in Texas, but across the country.

Innovative. Creative. Courageous. Inspiring. Resilient. These words ended up defining Main Street during that chaotic and challenging year.

The pandemic taught everyone lessons they didn't really want to learn, but now that some businesses are opening back up, it's a good time to be reminded of the positive aspects people have missed. It's especially rewarding to focus on the things Texans love about historic preservation and the independent local businesses that have found their homes in historic downtowns. People and places—these are what define Main Street.

Last year brought intense struggle to almost all aspects of Main Street, since retailers, restaurants, and others in the “experience economy” couldn't operate traditionally. At the same time, funding streams for local Main Street programs declined.

As expected, reinvestment activity in Texas' local Main Street districts dropped over what it was in 2019. But Texas' 88 local Main Street communities still reported about \$260 million in 2020 downtown investment activity.

While many companies closed during the pandemic, there was actually a net gain of 135 new small businesses in the network during the same period. Local Main Street programs, their cities, and their economic development organizations did their part to assist small businesses by redirecting existing incentive programs or creating new ones specifically for COVID-19 relief in addition to federal sources.

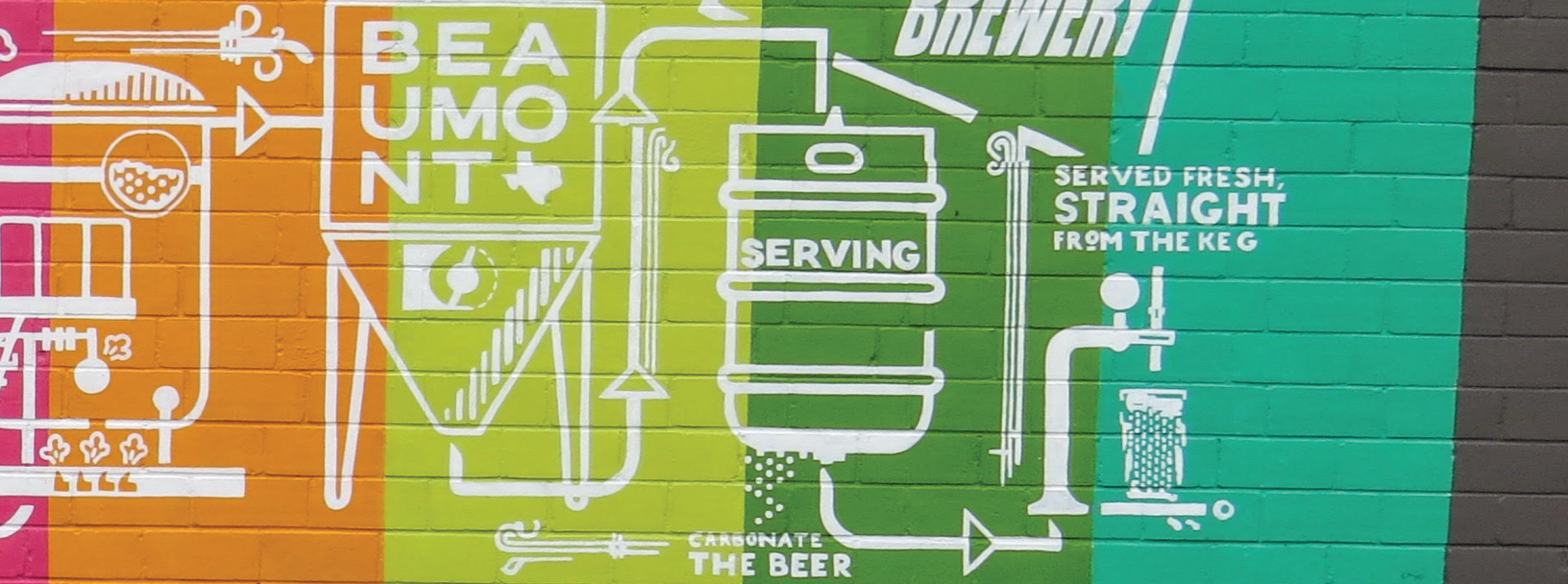


Today, Texas Main Street programs continue to work hard to restore local economies, support their small businesses, and welcome visitors and customers back to downtown. Likewise, Main Street entrepreneurs are reimagining their business models to capitalize on the public's stronger appreciation for the value of shopping local and shopping small—especially when it can be done in an appealing, well-cared-for historic downtown.

CREATIVE COMMERCE

In some Texas Main Street districts, restaurants and bars merged into a single space to expand their business models and capacity; in another city, a coffee and tea shop combined. Pilot projects to support changing business models were tested during this time as well. In Tyler and San Marcos, both urban Main Street programs, curbside parking and pop-up models were created to address immediate business needs and gauge for possible long-term implementation.

In 29-year Main Street community Mount Vernon (population 2,749), local entrepreneurs Jeff and Amy Briscoe, were especially impacted. As the owners of three local small businesses, they tried not to panic when confronted with periods of closure and declining sales. The answer? Sell their home and move into the store!



Their Main Street businesses, a gym and retail store, together occupy a 10,500-square-foot historic building. They successfully renovated it and became Mount Vernon's first live-work project under the city's new zoning ordinance. It is now workplace and home for the family of six.

"Life didn't just give the Briscoes lemons, it threw them like fastballs!" says Mount Vernon Main Street Manager Carolyn Teague. "We are so proud of what they've done."

In Cuero, Inspire Boutique—founded by lifelong friends Courtney Moore and Stephanie Nerada—opened during the pandemic in a storefront space downtown. Moore said, "Having a storefront was a huge dream of ours, and we weren't expecting it to happen as soon as it did. But life happened and here we are, and we are so grateful."

In downtown Harlingen, the Main Street program had great success in the number of buildings sold and leased, despite the pandemic's effect.

"Our occupancy rate is at the highest it's ever been at more than 97 percent," said Main Street Program Director Alexis Alaniz. "We welcomed new business owners and property owners who were eager to join our Main Street community."



ART WORKS

Art brings people together too, and plays a role in making downtown a destination.

In Brenham, a 21-year Main Street city, murals are a destination unto themselves. The stunning images—spanning two stories in some cases—are part of the Texas Arts & Music Festival that brings live music and artists downtown for live-art installations.

Beaumont utilized art as part of an economic development effort that resulted in one of the city's first breweries. The project included financing from the Main Street program's revolving loan fund and repurposing a downtown building from a 2016 rehabilitation. The city's Pour Brothers mural (above) illustrates the process of brewing craft beer as a focal point for the beer garden's side yard.

In Vernon, native son Roy Orbison is celebrated in a 110-by-25-foot mural unveiled last year as a project of the nearby Wichita Falls Alliance for Arts and Culture. The Texas Main Street design staff is also providing assistance to reimagine unused space in front of the mural.

From unanticipated success stories to eye-catching murals, the current comeback shows what Main Street is all about—a community program that grows and sustains vital local economies through a focus on historic preservation and entrepreneurship. Texas Main Street communities have certainly risen to that challenge.

For more information about the THC's Texas Main Street Program, visit thc.texas.gov/mainstreet. Developers may be interested in resources available at downtowntx.org.

ABOVE TOP: Pour Brothers Brewery, Beaumont. OPPOSITE: Briscoe's Emporium, Mount Vernon. LEFT: Roy Orbison Mural in Vernon.



Daingerfield State Park



Starr Family Home State Historic Site



Harrison County Historical Museum

NORTH BY NORTHEAST

EXPLORE MAIN STREETS AND NATURAL HERITAGE IN LONGVIEW, MARSHALL, AND JEFFERSON

After hunkering down for more than a year, many Texans are venturing out to the beach or mountains to experience the state's wide-open spaces. Don't forget the forests!

The East Texas woods beckon with leaves swaying in the gentle breeze and moss-draped cypress branches descending onto pristine lakes. Take shelter under these natural canopies while exploring historic hiking trails or visiting heritage attractions in the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Forest Trail Region.

The northeastern portion of the region is especially rich in history, with towns like Marshall, Longview, and Jefferson offering a glimpse into Texas' deep past. Local residents take pride in the area's 150-year-old homes and heritage, and they're eager to share their enthusiasm now that travelers are coming back into museums and onto Main Streets.

"We've seen a sense of optimism along with a community commitment to getting out and supporting local destinations and businesses," says Del Polikretis, executive director of the Texas Forest Trail Region. "Fortunately, we're an area with many outdoor activities, so we didn't get impacted by the pandemic as much as some other places."

Polikretis adds that although there was a drop in tourism dollars, the region's attractions have emerged more resilient and better connected. He has devoted efforts to online strategies to keep East Texans engaged from the safety of their homes. He also partnered with

organizations throughout the region to prioritize local destinations.

Now that these sites are opening and hosting more travelers, Polikretis is feeling optimistic about the region's economic growth and increased tourism.

"Texas heritage is everywhere in this part of the state, from historic downtowns with unique shops in Main Street districts to restored courthouses and a state historic site," Polikretis says. "This is where history and culture come naturally."

MARSHALL MATTERS

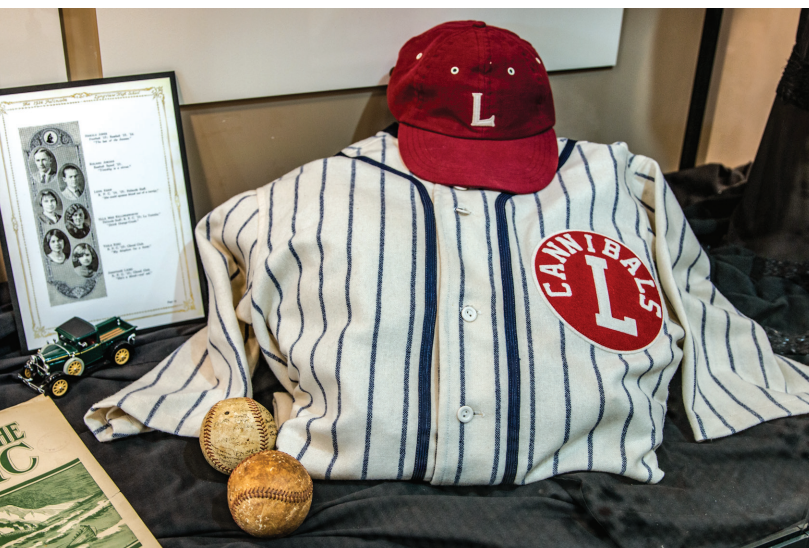
One of the most popular destinations in far northeast Texas is Marshall. Its geographic location provided a strategic connection to the region's active steamboat traffic and emerging railroad lines from points east.

One of Marshall's most prominent citizens was Dr. James Harper Starr, namesake of the THC's **Starr Family Home State Historic Site** (visitsstarrfamilyhome.com, 903-935-3044). In 1837, the Texas Congress established the General Land Office, and President Sam Houston selected Starr as the board of land commissioners' president. Later, Starr assisted with relocating the Republic of Texas' capital from Houston to Austin as a member of President Mirabeau B. Lamar's cabinet.

In 1870, Starr and his son Frank relocated their land and banking agency to Marshall; the following year, the Starr Family Home's main residence was constructed. Remarkably, the home stayed in the family for several generations, allowing the site to retain most of the original furnishings and collections.

"The Starr Family Home tour is tailored to your group and entering the house itself is like taking a step back in time," Polikretis says. "They will also be holding special events like cooking classes that map the 150-year history of the Starr family in Texas."

After visiting the Starr Family Home, head to the stately **Harrison County Historical Museum** (harrisoncountymuseum.org, 903-935-8417), which received the THC's John L. Nau, III Award of Excellence in Museums in 2020. Featuring state-of-the-art exhibits and an impressive collection of cultural displays and artifacts inside the Harrison County Courthouse, the museum offers heritage travelers a contemporary interpretation of Marshall's colorful and diverse history. Notable displays are dedicated to the town's musical legacy as "the birthplace of boogie woogie" and the African American debate students from Wiley College who defeated the national championship University of Southern California debate team in 1935.



visitors pass through a tunnel below the still-active Amtrak line and enter the depot to see passenger-train memorabilia, manufacturing exhibits, and interactive displays. South of the depot is Marshall's downtown commercial district, containing a diverse

Serving as the town's visual centerpiece, the courthouse itself is a compelling destination. Restored in 2009 through the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, the Neoclassical Beaux Arts-style building was constructed in 1901 of corn-yellow brick and carved limestone, with colossal pink granite columns, sculpted eagles on the roofline, and Lady Justice atop a restored cupola.

The museum's remarkable exhibits continue across the street at the "Service and Sacrifice: Harrison County at War" exhibit at the Memorial City Hall Performance Center. The museum contains dramatic exhibits dedicated to heroic local veterans in the nation's major wars. Upstairs, the Places in the Heart Gallery showcases everyday folks in the region—teachers, coaches, and church leaders—who made an impact in their communities.

Other notable heritage destinations in Marshall include the **Texas and Pacific Railway Museum and Depot** ([facebook.com/Marshall.Depot](https://www.facebook.com/Marshall.Depot), 903-938-9495, Friday–Saturday) featuring a historic 1912 train station. To access the Instagram-worthy red-brick building,

mix of shops, restaurants, and businesses in restored historic buildings that have benefitted from the THC's Texas Main Street Program. Among the most-visited sites is the rehabilitated 1898 **Weisman Building** ([facebook.com/TheWeisman](https://www.facebook.com/TheWeisman)), which now houses a café and a collection of merchants offering antiques, pottery, art, and furniture.

TAKING THE LONGVIEW

About 20 miles west of Marshall is Longview, one of Texas' larger Main Street cities (population circa 81,000). The railroad played a major role in establishing the town, when it became the western terminus of the Southern Pacific Railroad for several years in the early 1870s. The name is reportedly a reference to the impressive views from the home of Ossamus Hitch Methvin, who sold land to the railroad.

Although Longview's most famous former resident is actor Matthew McConaughey, another citizen made an even bigger impact. Inventor and engineer Robert LeTourneau moved here in 1946 to open a steel mill, and his company produced 70 percent of the specially designed earth-moving

equipment to build roads and airstrips for the Allies in World War II. Later, he helped create mobile platforms for offshore drilling. Nearby LeTourneau University honors his legacy.

Take a long view of the city's history at the **Gregg County Historical Museum** (gregghistorical.com, 903-753-5840). Its home is the 1910 Everett Building, one of the most remarkable structures in town, with a rounded corner bay and recessed main entrance flanked by stately pink granite Corinthian columns. Originally constructed as the Citizens National Bank, it is Longview's only remaining example of Classical Revival commercial architecture and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Inside, inlaid tile floors and pressed-tin ceilings surround exhibits highlighting agricultural advancements—including an entire area dedicated to LeTourneau—and a broad collection of Caddo tribe artifacts housed in a climate-controlled environment with informative panels.

Around the corner, the 1939 **Longview Post Office** lobby houses "Rural East Texas," painted by Thomas M. Stell, Jr. in 1942. The massive oil-on-canvas painting depicts a fascinating scene of agricultural advancement, from horse-pulled plows to tractor-drawn tillers. For more art, head to the nearby **Longview Museum of Fine Arts** (lmfa.org, 903-753-8103), which specializes in photography and contemporary traveling exhibits.

For a true heritage-travel getaway, book a cabin at the naturally compelling **Daingerfield State Park** (tpwd.texas.gov, 903-645-2921), about 40 miles north of Longview. Two companies from the Civilian Conservation Corps

(CCC)—including a Black unit—built the park between 1935 and 1939. What sets Daingerfield apart from most of Texas' CCC projects is its departure from the traditional rustic aesthetic; instead, federal designers chose a modern approach of cast concrete for several buildings. An exceptional example is the park's main lakeside structure, featuring sturdy walls punctuated by distinctive eight-point stars.

The rest of the 501-acre park is equally as captivating, with several historic cabins, a placid CCC-constructed lake with boat rentals, and several wooded treks. Most notable is the Rustling Leaves Nature Trail, which winds through dense pine-hardwood forest and provides a wilderness escape for nature lovers.

JAUNT TO JEFFERSON

Tucked into the upper corner of north-eastern Texas is Jefferson, a quaint Deep-Southern community offering a pleasant escape to the Piney Woods' past. In its glory days of the mid-1800s, Jefferson was a boomtown with a kaleidoscope of cultures, from East Coast shop merchants to freedmen to westward-bound pioneers. For more than a decade, Jefferson—then the sixth-largest city in

Texas—welcomed a steady flow of steamboats bringing worldly influences.

In 1873, things changed dramatically—the destruction of the Red River raft, a natural dam on the river, lowered the surrounding water levels, making navigation to Jefferson via steamboat from Caddo Lake nearly impossible. The same year, the main line of the Texas and Pacific Railway bypassed Jefferson. Without major railroad or steamboat access, Jefferson's population began to decline.

In the mid-1900s, locals began looking at Jefferson's colorful past to preserve and promote its heritage, especially its 100-plus state and nationally recognized historic buildings, including the recently restored **Marion County Courthouse** (see page 14).

Across the street from the courthouse is the charming **Jefferson General Store** (jeffersongeneralstore.com, 903-665-8481). Walking through the creaky front screen doors offers a step back in time, with vintage trinkets and modern souvenirs mingling in a historic 1870s mercantile setting.

Just down the road is the **Atalanta Railroad**



Car (facebook.com/jaygouldatalanta, 903-665-2513), a private railcar used by railroad tycoon Jay Gould. The Atalanta features nearly a dozen rooms with opulent interior materials like mahogany, crystal light fixtures, and silver bathroom accessories. It's located across from the 1858 **Excelsior House Hotel** (theexcelsiorhouse.com, 903-665-2513). During Jefferson's heyday, Ulysses S. Grant, Rutherford B. Hayes, and Oscar Wilde stayed at the Excelsior, one of the oldest establishments of its kind still in business in Texas.

For the area's premier recreational destination, head downriver from Jefferson to **Caddo Lake State Park** (tpwd.texas.gov, 903-679-3351). Spanish moss and outstretched cypress trees surround this mysteriously beautiful lake. Highlights include CCC cabins, canoe rentals, swimming, fishing, and hiking.

For information about more heritage tourism destinations in the area, order a free copy of the THC's *Texas Forest Trail Region* travel guide by calling 866-276-6219 or visiting texastimetravel.com.



OPPOSITE: Gregg County Historical Museum. LEFT: Longview Post Office. ABOVE: Caddo Lake State Park.

DISCOVER HISTORIC PROPERTIES

RECENT NATIONAL REGISTER LISTINGS BOOST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

By Gregory Smith
THC National Register Program Coordinator

Although many of Texas' historic preservation efforts were curtailed by the pandemic, the agency's National Register program continues to research, process, and approve nominations. Meetings were held online instead of in person, and staff members addressed unprecedented obstacles by adapting their approach to consultations and certifications.

In the process, they helped approve several recently listed historic properties that reflect the diversity of Texas' rich cultural heritage. These sites include commercial historic districts in Bogata, Port Arthur, and Mineral Wells, where the listings will also help facilitate tax credit rehabilitation projects.

PORT ARTHUR DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Port Arthur Downtown Historic District features 14 landmark buildings in a central business district that reflect the city's emergence as a prominent shipping outlet and one of the nation's most important petrochemical centers. Several significant commercial and government buildings include the Beaux Arts-style U.S. Post Office and Federal Building (1912), the 10-story Renaissance Revival-style Vaughan Hotel (1929), and the Modern Classical-style First National Bank of Port Arthur (1930) and County Office Building (1936). The First National Bank has been fully rehabilitated through the state and federal tax credit programs, while the rehabilitation of other buildings in the district is underway.



MINERAL WELLS CENTRAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Mineral Wells Central Historic District reflects the city's role as a tourist destination and one of the state's most successful health resort communities through the mid-20th century. Founded in 1881 at the source of plentiful underground mineral water, the city attracted over 150,000 visitors annually during its peak popularity, as the capitalization of these wells spurred development and commercial growth. Two properties in the district are spectacular resort hotels, the 1927 Crazy Water and the 1929 Baker, both of which are undergoing rehabilitation using federal and state tax credits.

BOGATA HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Bogata Historic District in Red River County has been the center of the small rural community's economic and social life since 1910, when a new central business district was platted and developed near the crossing of the Paris and Mount Pleasant Railroad. The historic brick buildings on Main Street date to the second decade of the 20th century. The district was listed for its significant association with the development of a commercial center for this agricultural region.



BRANIFF INTERNATIONAL HOSTESS COLLEGE

The 1968 Braniff International Hostess College in Dallas was a training facility for Braniff International Airways flight attendants until 1975. After Greatamerica Insurance Company bought the firm in 1964, the airline successfully rebranded itself as a uniquely stylish and modern way to travel. In 1968, Braniff applied its splashy corporate brand to its new Dallas hostess college, where flight attendant training focused as much on personal appearance as safety protocols and customer service. Braniff's female hostesses, famously dressed in Emilio Pucci-designed uniforms, met the airline's glamorous corporate image in the late 1960s, and in the 1970s, unionized flight attendants won legal victories and earned greater job security and advancement opportunities. The building is the only one in Texas associated with female flight attendants' unique labor experience and whose collective efforts in the late 1960s and early 1970s affected meaningful change to the profession.

To learn more about the National Register of Historic Places, visit thc.texas.gov/nationalregister.

TEXARKANA NATIONAL BANK AND TNB MOTOR BANK AND PARKING GARAGE

The Texarkana National Bank Building is an eight-story commercial structure just a few yards from the Arkansas state line in downtown Texarkana. Designed by the Fort Worth firm Sanguinet and Staats, the bank moved into its new headquarters in 1913, and in 1924, a full-height matching addition more than doubled the building's size. It was modernized in 1968, but the recent removal of its full slipcover revealed a remarkably intact historic façade. The building was listed in the National Register as an excellent local example of a Beaux Arts high-rise. At the other end of the block, the four-story 1960 Motor Bank and Garage, designed by Wyatt Hedrick, features a distinctive perforated concrete screen, a common period element for postwar Texas commercial façades. This building grew to incorporate the bank's first two-story building in 1962, and reflects the bank's efforts to keep its downtown location viable by offering drive-up services. Both buildings are undergoing rehabilitation for commercial use.

OPPOSITE BOTTOM: First National Bank of Port Arthur. OPPOSITE TOP: Downtown Mineral Wells. TOP LEFT: TNB Motor Bank and Parking Garage, Texarkana. BELOW: Braniff International Hostess College, Dallas. NOTE: All photos are pre-rehabilitation.



REDEDICATED TO THE PAST

MARION COUNTY CELEBRATES RESTORED COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Article and photos by Andy Rhodes
The Medallion Managing Editor

East Texas experienced one of the rainiest springs in history this year, but the sun broke through for an hour on May 22 to help locals and visiting officials rededicate the Marion County Courthouse in Jefferson.

The stately 1912 courthouse received much-needed upgrades with assistance from the Texas Historical Commission's (THC) Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, including restored granite floors and walls, a historic judge's bench, and seven original safes. The Classical Revival three-story building features a yellow brick exterior with Doric columns, a terra-cotta roof, and raised basement.

"We're thrilled that Marion County is joining our family of successfully completed restorations on this journey to preserve and celebrate Texas history," said THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe at the ceremony. "A community that has dedicated itself to completing their courthouse restoration shows a level of commitment and care that not all counties can claim. It's a physical representation of how strongly you care about your community and its citizens."

Wolfe shared the podium at the ceremony with several other speakers and local officials, including project architect and former THC Chairman Karl Komatsu and Marion County Judge Leward LaFleur. Marsha Thomas, great-granddaughter of the county commissioner who was there when the courthouse was erected in 1913, had the honor of cutting the ceremonial yellow ribbon.

Although few historic photos exist of the courthouse during its early years, preservation architects benefited from a sister courthouse on the other side of the state. Architect Elmer G. Withers also designed the nearly identical Roberts County Courthouse in Miami (75 miles northeast of Amarillo), providing a real-life model for Marion County's restoration plans.

"This courthouse will join other attractions this lovely community offers and contribute to jobs and economic stability for generations," Wolfe added.

For more information about the THC's Texas Historic Courthouse Preservation Program, visit thc.texas.gov/thcpp.

TOP RIGHT: THC Executive Director Mark Wolfe speaks at the event. MIDDLE RIGHT: Guests walking up the steps to enter the courthouse for the first time since the restoration. BOTTOM RIGHT: Local Boy Scouts raise the U.S. flag at the beginning of the ceremony.



KEEPING THE LIGHTHOUSE

PORT ISABEL HISTORIC SITE IS A BEACON FOR HERITAGE TRAVELERS

By Andy Rhodes
The Medallion Managing Editor

The Port Isabel Lighthouse has been a beloved landmark on the Laguna Madre near South Padre Island for nearly 170 years. The Texas Historical Commission (THC) gained custody of the site in 2019; since then, the agency has been coordinating preservation efforts with its architectural staff and site managers at the City of Port Isabel to maintain the popular destination's heritage.

Visitors will soon have an even stronger draw to the site when a lighthouse lens is expected to be installed in the coming year. The agency is planning to place a full-scale reproduction of the site's Fresnel lens back into the lantern room.

"It will be a functional rotating light, just as the original lamp was," explains Hal Simon, Chief Interpretive Specialist with the THC's Historic Sites Division. "The lens fits into the top lantern room of the lighthouse, while the rotating mechanism which operates it is located in the store below it."

He adds that Fresnel lenses are a type of composite compact lens developed by French physicist Augustin-Jean Fresnel in the 1820s for use in lighthouses. The eight-sided lenses installed in the Port Isabel lighthouse were nearly 5 feet tall and 40 inches wide, with 11 prisms above and four prisms below the central bullseye lens on each side.

The reproduction lens will make the lighthouse a true beacon, drawing visitors to experience this historic Gulf Coast treasure's original purpose—assisting sea captains navigating the waters of the low-lying Texas coast.

A HISTORIC DRAW

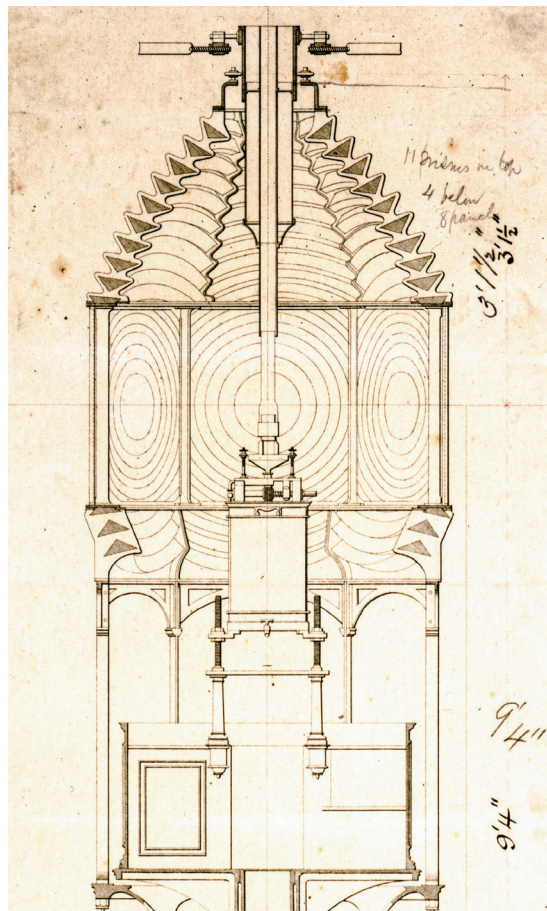
The lighthouse site dates to 1846 when it was initially developed as Fort Polk, after Texas' annexation to the U.S. stirred international tensions. Plans for a lighthouse began in 1850, although nearby Brazos Island was initially preferred for its location directly on the coastline. The federal government's

occupation of the Fort Polk property was the determining factor in its location.

In 1895, William Egly was appointed as the lighthouse keeper at what was then called Point Isabel. He served in that role for 10 years, until the lighthouse was decommissioned.

Egly kept extremely busy. In his lighthouse keepers' handbook, he remarked that he was obligated to provide a tour of the lighthouse if visitors requested one.

"The rules were that there could only be three people at a time, the tours couldn't be at night, and the guests couldn't be drunk," says Valerie Bates, site manager of Port Isabel Lighthouse State Historic Site.



The lighthouse keeper job was highly regimented. The oil house for the main lamp was offsite, so Egly had to make frequent excursions to restock the supply. Weights in the lighthouse's center pole had to be physically wound several times each day. Three large lamp wicks had to be trimmed to a very precise specification, and the lens had to be cleaned daily.

In 1926, locals raised money to restore the lighthouse because it was such a popular tourism draw. Visitation temporarily

ceased during World Wars I and II, when the lighthouse was used as an observation tower to monitor against potential enemy attacks.

In 1950, the lighthouse and its associated buildings were donated to the state as a historic site. The Texas State Parks Board rehabilitated the lighthouse in 1952, and the Texas Parks & Wildlife Department completed another major upgrade project in 1970.

"We enjoy having this wonderful story in our town that reminds visitors about an important part of Texas' past," Bates says.

LAUNCHING CONCERNS

When the lighthouse projected its first bright beams onto the Gulf Coast in 1852, it was inconceivable that its range would one day include a rocket-launching site. But in 2021, powerful rocket engines from the SpaceX rocket port cause the ground to vibrate, which impacts the lighthouse approximately five miles away.

"We're especially concerned about the cracking of the lighthouse's foundation and the structure itself," says Bates.



"We're also worried about any potential damage that might not be visible under the surface."

The THC's architectural and historical reviewers have been working with SpaceX for nearly a decade to address these concerns, and regulatory issues related to vibration from launches are currently being worked out. According to Justin Kockritz, a project reviewer with the agency's History Programs Division, SpaceX engineers, THC architects, City of Port Isabel site managers, and Federal Aviation Administration and National Park Service specialists are working together.

"The utmost care must be taken to ensure this structure isn't damaged by the expected launch

vibrations," Kockritz says.

For more information about the lighthouse, go to visitportisabellighthouse.com.

PREVIOUS PAGE, LEFT: An 1880s drawing of the lighthouse's lens. Courtesy U.S. Lighthouse Society. RIGHT: Port Isabel Lighthouse today. ABOVE: Don Chencho and the old lighthouse he helped build in 1852.

THE FRIENDS OF THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
AND JOHN L. NAU, III, CHAIRMAN, TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION PRESENT

Une Belle Soirée

CELEBRATING A VOYAGE THROUGH HISTORY

Join us for an evening celebrating the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission's 25th anniversary as nonprofit partner to the Texas Historical Commission! Proceeds from the event will support the Friends of the Texas Historical Commission.

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 14, 2021
6 P.M. COCKTAILS | 7 P.M. DINNER | PROGRAM AND AWARDS | LIVE AUCTION
BULLOCK TEXAS STATE HISTORY MUSEUM
1800 Congress Ave., Austin, TX 78701
Business Attire
Purchase tables/tickets at thcfriends.org/une-belle-soiree-table-underwritingsponsorships

NEWS BRIEFS



THC ACCEPTING EVENTS FOR ARCHEOLOGY MONTH CALENDAR

Every October, Texas Archeology Month (TAM) celebrates the spirit of discovery and promotes awareness of archeological programs throughout the state. The Texas Historical Commission is accepting event submissions from the public for the annual TAM calendar. Anyone hosting may submit an archeology or history-related event in conjunction with TAM to submit information online at thc.texas.gov/tam. The deadline for submissions is September 15.

The THC sponsors TAM in association with the Texas Archeological Society and the Council of Texas Archeologists.

For more information, contact the THC's Archeology Division at 512-463-5915 or visit thc.texas.gov/tam.

FREE ADMISSION CONTINUES FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL AT THC'S STATE HISTORIC SITES



This summer, the THC's state historic sites are participating in the Blue Star Museums program that gives active military personnel and their families free admission to museums and historic sites. The program, coordinated by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), lasts through Labor Day (September 6, 2021).

More than 1,800 museums in all 50 states are taking part in the initiative, the ninth consecutive year of the program. The program is a collaboration of the NEA, Blue Star Families, the Department of Defense, and museums and state agencies such as the THC. A number of the THC's historic sites are dedicated to preserving the memory of military service in Texas, such as the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg and Fannin Battleground in Fannin.

For more information, and to learn which museums are participating, visit arts.gov/bluestarmuseums. For more information about the THC's state historic sites, visit texashistoricsites.com or contact 512-463-7948.

FRIENDS OF THE THC RECEIVE FEDERAL GRANT



The Friends of the Texas Historical Commission received a grant of more than \$200,000 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services' Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Grant Fund.

The program will help the THC address the need for distance learning content by creating online educational and interpretive programming that is accessible to users with varying levels of access to online content. This project will allow the THC to create an online educational platform that will be a critical tool for the agency's digital engagement beyond the scope of this grant.

The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums.

To learn more, visit imls.gov.

VISIT A HISTORIC SITE NEAR YOU

Don't miss an opportunity to interact with Texas history. Learn more at thc.texas.gov/events.

TOP LEFT: Texas Archeology Month events offer family-friendly activities.

WHERE ON EARTH...IN TEXAS

KNOW YOUR TEXAS HISTORY? Put your skills to the test by identifying the pictured site! The first three people who correctly identify the location will receive a prize and be named in the next issue of *The Medallion*. Send your answer to: *The Medallion*, P.O. Box 12276, Austin, TX 78711-2276 or email to medallion@thc.texas.gov. Limit one prize annually per contestant.

NEED A CLUE? Observant readers may notice that the building at right in the Texas Panhandle Plains Region has a twin referenced in this issue of *The Medallion*.

ANSWER TO THE PHOTO FROM THE LAST



ISSUE: The altar pictured at left is at the 1920s La Lomita Chapel in Mission. Its first incarnation washed away in 1865 due to flooding from the nearby Rio Grande.

Congratulations and (eventual) prizes go to the only person who submitted a correct response: Jose Martinez of Temple. Thanks to the readers who participated!

